

Hi! My name is Valerie Webb-Allman and I am thankful for the opportunity to speak today.

Today, there are so many people telling their stories and giving valuable information about the damage that the fossil fuel and petrochemical industries have done. I wish that I could say that this is a new problem and that we are addressing this danger quickly, but I can't. I'm turning 40 in less than a year and I have heard about these issues my whole life. Now, I watch as it directly impacts my children's lives and I can't listen to people justify it anymore. Enough is enough.

In Pittsburgh and the Mon Valley, we have a history of air pollution. I grew up in Michigan and I heard all about how terrible it was when the steel industry was booming there. As I got older, I heard about how much better the air quality became and how much cleaner it was. What I didn't know was that "better" just meant not as bad but still highly ranked among the worst in the country. I moved to Pittsburgh in 2005. I never had a real problem with my lungs or upper respiratory infections until after that. Now, I am on 3 inhalers, a pill, and a shot just to be able to breathe. I still can't breathe when we have air quality alert days and, even when we are not having an orange day or worse, I find that I can't exert myself outside. Too many of those days has led my doctors to put me on steroids to the point that I developed other impactful health issues, like adrenal insufficiency. The impact of the air quality in Pittsburgh has directly led to my inability to participate in the things that bring me joy. Being chronically ill leads to depression, anxiety, and so much more. It's not just asthma at the end of the day, it's my whole life.

My daughter has asthma too, just like so many other kids in our area. She loves being outside all year long. It breaks my heart everytime I have to tell her it isn't safe for her to be outside, that she can't just be a kid with her friends outside or riding her scooter. It makes me angry when I think about all the things she is missing out on so that someone can make billions of dollars in profit. I listen to people all the time talk about how kids need to be outside more and how damaging it is for them to just be inside and on electronics all day. But, how is that possible when it is unsafe for them to be outside and the very air they breathe will send them to the hospital? Air pollution is forcing them to stay inside all day. It's making it unsafe for these kids to participate in sports, it's stealing their time from their friends, it's ruining their health, and it is killing them. It's not just asthma, it's their whole lives.

Beyond air quality, we can also talk about how the fossil fuel and petrochemical polluters are destroying our water, our land, delicate ecosystems, our neighborhoods and even our economy. The physical evidence showing the impact of these industries on the planet and their targeted impact on low-income and marginalized communities are well documented and vetted. I don't need to give all the studies on how this damage happens and how long it takes to recover. That information is widely available. What I will talk a little about is how it damages neighborhoods and targeted communities. We know that environmental racism is a real thing. They aren't building their industries in affluent, white neighborhoods. No, instead they are raising them in areas where low-income families live, where black and brown families live, and where they think they can get away with hurting people that wealthy investors and lawmakers won't care about. The system is working exactly as it was designed and it is time to stop

pretending that this isn't a problem. Our entire region is in a health crisis over the air & water quality but certain neighborhoods have documented a significantly higher amount of people being harmed by it. Their air and water quality always shows increased levels of pollution and that is unacceptable. This targeted assault on low income, black and brown communities needs to be stopped.

So, what do we do? We put our money where our mouth is, that's what. It's beyond time that we keep paying for these polluters to thrive when they steal our ability to. It's beyond time to divest from and penalize these industries for making trillions of dollars, over generations of knowingly killing people, and force them to invest a fraction to fix it. It's time for our lawmakers to enforce changes and invest in healthier, more sustainable energy sources so that this problem doesn't continue to get worse. The overwhelming number of jobs in those industries have skills that are directly transferable to sustainable energy sector jobs. We can invest in transferring those jobs over so that families don't suffer. We have the technology to make it happen, and not over several more decades, to do it now. What is stopping this from happening now if it isn't the money or the technology? We already pay more than enough to support the industries that are killing us. There is no need to keep it going so that our children continue paying with their lives. Thank you.